

1973

## Seven Pairs

Anne Griffin Johnson  
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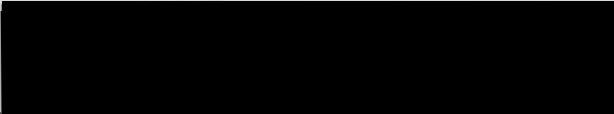
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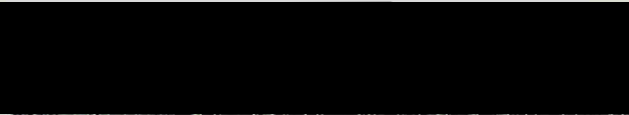
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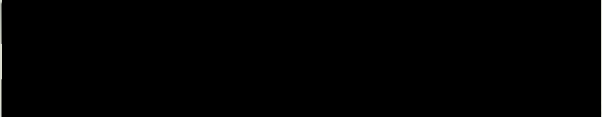
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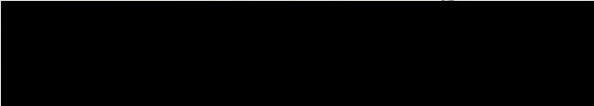
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This thesis project consists of seven pairs of acrylic  
paintings on canvas. The compositions are arrangements of  
flat, straight-edged, geometric shapes. The entire surface  
of each painting is considered positive, and each shape has  
a structural relationship to the framing edge of the canvas.

Color ideas and surface qualities vary from pair to pair. The works were paired for the sake of (A) emphasizing the object quality of the canvases and their flat, wall-like surfaces, (B) diminishing the immediacy of any single image so that the viewer's attention tends to be focussed on the whole rather than on parts, and (C) allowing variations on a theme to be made.

These paintings refer to nothing outside themselves. The content of the works resides in their formal equilibrium.

SEVEN PAIRS

by

ANNE GRIFFIN JOHNSON

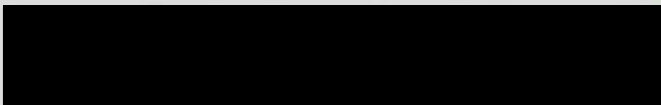
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in  
ART

Portland State University  
1973


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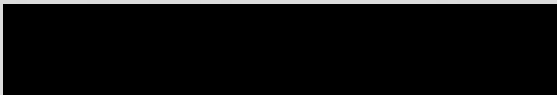
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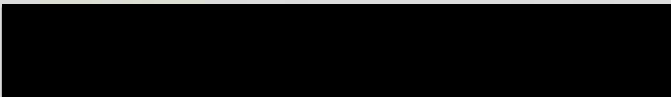
  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	iv
PART	
I FORMAL PROBLEMS. . . . .	1
Introduction . . . . .	1
Physical/Optical Contrasts . . . . .	1
Space and Shape. . . . .	3
Large Scale. . . . .	8
Pairing. . . . .	9
Color. . . . .	13
Method . . . . .	15
Sculptural Tendencies. . . . .	16
II RATIONALE. . . . .	17
Introduction . . . . .	17
What is Abstract Painting? . . . . .	18
Problems of Abstract Painting. . . . .	22
The Experience of Viewing Abstract Painting. . . . .	24
REFERENCES CITED. . . . .	29

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	<u>Geogroplex</u> . . . . .	2
2	<u>Two-Fold</u> . . . . .	2
3	<u>Mag's Pie</u> . . . . .	4
4	<u>Morning News</u> . . . . .	5
5	<u>Ellflaps</u> . . . . .	6
6	<u>December 4</u> . . . . .	7
7	<u>Bloom Side Out</u> . . . . .	10

## PART I

### FORMAL PROBLEMS

#### INTRODUCTION

This thesis project consists of seven pairs of abstract acrylic paintings on canvas. Although images and handling of materials vary, the formal ideas underlying the paintings remain constant. What follows here is an outline of those formal ideas. The implicit content of the paintings is discussed in Part II in the course of some general reflections on the value of abstract form.

#### I. PHYSICAL/OPTICAL CONTRASTS

In each pair of paintings, there is some tension between physical and optical qualities. For example, the canvas surface never appears to be pierced by spatial illusions unless there is strong equivocation. The thickly textured paint surface in Geogroplex (Fig. 1) argues against suggestions in the color and composition of overlapping and bending, advancing and receding. The literal right-angle bend of Two-Fold (Fig. 2) contrasts with illusory space created by color and drawn forms; therefore it serves as a reminder that the viewer stands before a canvas wall, not





Figure 1. Geogroplex. Liquitex and Rhoplex on canvas, 66"x90" and 66"x116".



Figure 2. Two-Fold. Liquitex on canvas, 68"x122" and 68"x92".

an open window. The overall flat pattern quality of Mag's Pie (Fig. 3) contradicts the multiple illusions of space and volume within the "pattern." None of the Mag's Pie illusions are completed logically, reaffirming that space and volume are fictive in these (and any) pictures. The slick, flat surface of Morning News (Fig. 4) or the dry surface of Ellflaps (Fig. 5), where the paint sinks into the canvas texture, work against visual illusion. In short, the spatial illusions which are created naturally by diagonal lines, contrasting color, and overlapping, appear in these thesis works but do not overshadow the true physical flatness of the canvas support.

## II. SPACE AND SHAPE

These are not "all-over" paintings. There is a hierarchy of form in all of them, although it is minimized in December 4 (Fig. 6) and Mag's Pie. Nevertheless, all parts, or shapes, in these pictures are at least potentially positive, because they are all complete, simple, and, within any given painting, all of a kind. There are no scraps of left-over, negative space. Only straight-edged, geometric shapes are used. These have an easy structural relationship to the canvas edge which helps to make all shapes seem positive. The large blue shapes in the left hand part of Geogroplex, a rectangle and an irregular pentagon, do not fuse in the viewer's eye as a single blue ground (or negative space)

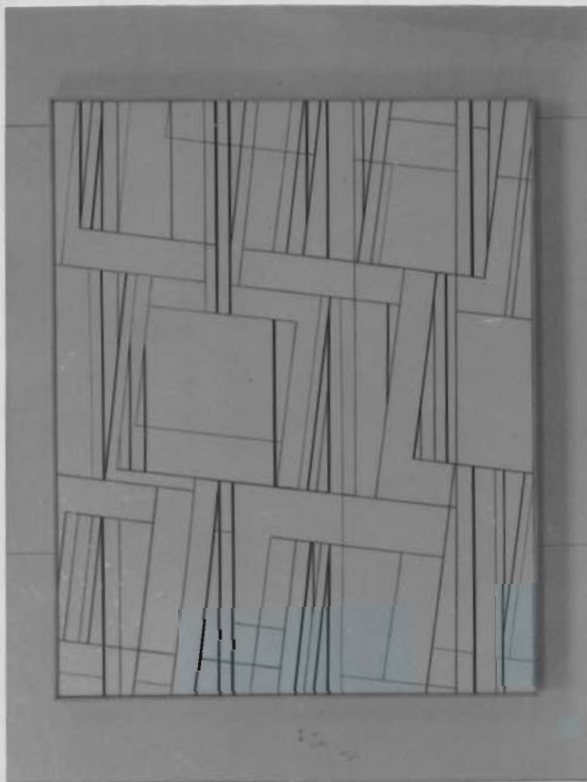
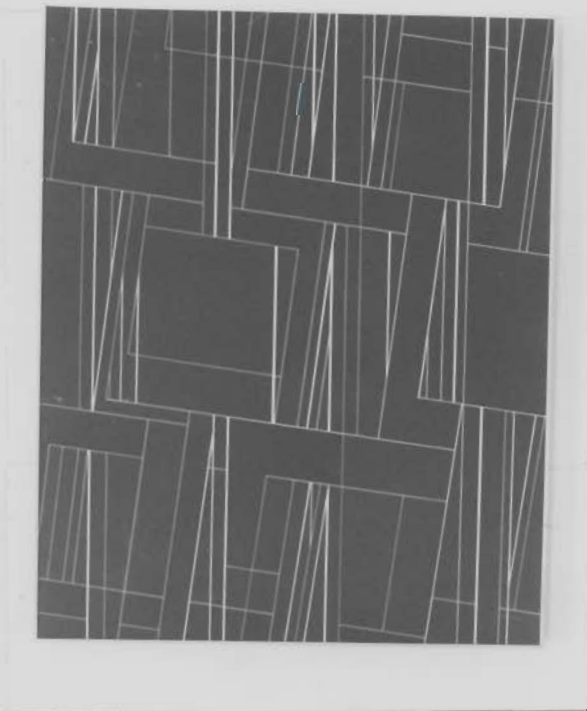


Figure 3. Mag's Pie. Liquitex on canvas, each panel 52"x66".



Figure 4. Morning News. Liquitex on canvas, each panel 56"x47".



Figure 5. Ellflaps. Liquitex on canvas, each panel 92"x68".

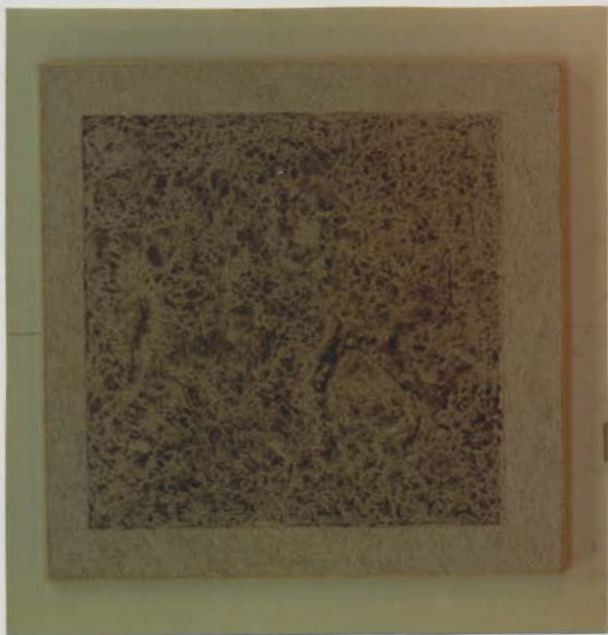
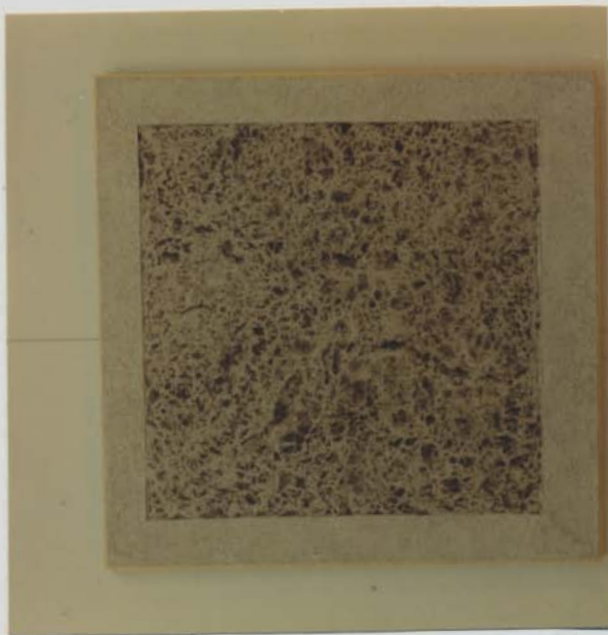


Figure 6. December 4. Liquitex, Rhoplex, and Perlite on  
canvas, each panel 64" x 64".



interrupted by the other shapes in the painting, because those two shapes are perfectly self-contained and have the same characteristics as the other shapes in the painting, as well as the same degree of similarity to the shape of the canvas as a whole.

My interest in composing with shapes which are all potentially positive comes from modernist criticism, primarily Greenberg and Fried, and modernist painting, in particular Newman, Noland, Stella, and Olitski. It is an involvement with the flat surface as the first fact of a painting and also with the correlative idea that the optical continuity of visible reality is the proper model for abstract painting, rather than the tactile discontinuity of three-dimensional forms in space.<sup>1</sup>

### III. LARGE SCALE

Most of these paintings are relatively large. (Two of the pairs are seventeen feet long.) Even without the use of illusionary deep space, I have tried to create a sense of scale greater than the literal dimensions of the canvases. Some apparent enlargement of space was possible through scale and color manipulations, but the extension of the canvases to the viewing periphery was the principle means of opening up the paintings. Expansive colored

<sup>1</sup>Clement Greenberg, "On the Role of Nature in Modernist Painting," Art and Culture (Boston, 1961), p. 173.

shapes and fields absorb the viewer into the world of the painting. This adds to the sense of space already created by color pulsation, diagonal movements, and relative scale changes within the compositions. It also emphasizes the wall-like character of the paintings. Geogroplex, Two-Fold, and Bloom Side Out (Fig. 7) are the largest works in this thesis group, and they exhibit the qualities described above most clearly. The corner pieces carry the extension of color farthest, since at a close viewing distance they actually begin to surround the viewer.

#### IV. PAIRING

These works were made in pairs for two purposes, one having to do with the extension of the physical surface, the other having to do with the doubling and/or varying of the image itself.

It has been suggested above that paintings of reasonably large dimensions clearly echo the wall against which they are hung, especially when seen near enough to fill one's peripheral vision. The effect of pairing paintings is to heighten the wall-echo by reminding the viewer of the physicality of the canvas. Multiplying the single work erodes its individuality and interferes with the viewer's tendency to see everything within the framing edge as a nebulous space rather than as a flat surface. The power of illusion is compromised most when the composi-





Figure 7. Bloom Side Out. Liquitex and Rhoplex  
on canvas, 116"x66" and 66"x90".

tion of the paired canvases is identical. Exact repetition carries slight overtones of mass production which heighten the object quality of the paintings and necessarily diminish spatial illusion within them.

The corner compositions, Two-Fold and Bloom Side Out, are a special case. Here the two canvas-walls are not in the same plane, so they unite to form a single structure. They would not exist as repetitions even if both parts of the right angles had been of the same size and composition. Even separated by a few inches, they would be perceptually united by the viewer's unconscious sense of the corner as a unitary structure. Precisely because we are so familiar with the corner shape, a right-angle meeting of flat walls, a painting in such a space does have a wall-like character which tends to lessen compositional spatial illusions overall, if not in specific parts. The asymmetrical L-shape of the two joined canvases of Bloom Side Out is stronger than any divisions within that particular composition. This again serves to heighten the object quality of the canvases and lessen spatial illusion.

As far as the image itself is concerned, another strong effect of doubling is a sort of unfocussing of the single image and a diminution of its immediacy. Some real movement in space and time becomes a part of experiencing the work. The tension between this movement and the fixed, static nature of the single image is perhaps strongest in

December 4. There each individual image consists of frame and square field, a very common ordering of shapes and one which is strongly focussed, symmetrical, and closed. Only the uniform grey coloring and the all-over patterning of the square field suggest openness in the individual compositions; but when the two paintings are paired, these qualities of openness dominate. The rigid, single image is dissolved and a serene lack of focus becomes the primary experience of the doubled work.

Several of these thesis works can be called variations on a theme. In the case of Ellflaps, a deliberately peculiar and irrational theme was used as the basis of both paintings. The theme consists of two parts: the top section contains outlined, greyish shapes and suggestions of volumetric form; below there are brighter colors and flat shapes with no outlines; spatial fluctuations in the lower part are created primarily by color and the overlapping of a single, inverted L-shape. The model for this apparently arbitrary system which produces works in its own image is that of the laws of nature which cause seemingly bizarre phenomena to be maintained and repeated and which, when formulated in scientific terms, allow us to see order where before we saw only accident. The odd composition of Ellflaps was to have been justified by a simple repetition which would imply a necessary ordering principle; the variations were to have been only those which might occur among members of

the same species. Working on the paintings, it became clear that there is far less depth in this compositional process than in the workings of nature. Natural phenomena exhibit several levels of order, from the grossest external activity, like the behavior of an animal or the erosion of a rock, down to the subatomic structure of a thing; and at each level the order is complex and far from obvious. It must also be said that whereas nature only appears to be arbitrary--even the role of chance can be described in terms of natural law--the design of these paintings is in fact arbitrary.

Variations on a theme are also made in Mag's Pie and Morning News, but there the variations are quite simple and are based on a formal idea. Color is reversed in Mag's Pie, and primaries are contrasted with black-outlined pastel tints in Morning News. Any single painting from these two pairs is complete in itself and can be exhibited separately.

## V. COLOR

Modernist critics all but ignore color, and rightly so. Little of what can be said about color in a given work is expressive either of how color is derived or how it affects the viewer. Certainly, hue, value, saturation, extension, and temperature have been analyzed at every step of these paintings, but the larger choices of color



key were intuitive. The particular expression of each painting is intimately connected with color, but analysis of this would not be fruitful. Spontaneous color expression can best be experienced spontaneously. Color seems to be the one element of painting which has no possible paraphrase.

Some of the formal color problems explored in this thesis are therefore listed here without any discussion of the associated expressive qualities. (1) Values are adjusted in Two-Fold to hold down the overall spatial movement of color. There is considerable spatial activity between any two shapes but less in the painting as a whole. (2) Sometimes value jumps are increased, as in Geogroplex where they create a feeling of spatial play against the bubbly surface texture of the painting. Color resides in the surface material, yet optically it tends toward an independent existence. The difference between the real surface and the illusion of space is emphasized. (3) The challenge of using the pure primaries, red, yellow, and blue, was taken up in Morning News, Part I. This, the first of the thesis paintings, was a deliberately exaggerated step in the direction of strong color contrast. It was helpful in establishing a standard for Two-Fold, Geogroplex, Bloom Side Out, and even Mag's Pie. (4) In Geogroplex, black is used as a stamped-on, non-adjusted, graphic note, whereas in Ellflaps the colors are closely

adjusted and non-repetitive. The Ellflaps colors cannot be named and remembered like the blue-green-yellow-black of Geogroplex or the primaries of Morning News.

## VI. METHOD

Certain bases for making compositional decisions have been described, e.g. the use of pairs and the use of frame-related, positive, rectilinear shapes. In December 4, the composition was partially determined by two additional factors: the "will" of the materials used and the limitations of certain self-imposed rules for the act of applying the materials. The two canvases were covered simultaneously. Paint was measured carefully for each application. The same mixtures in the same amount were applied by the same action (usually pouring). The images were to be varied by differences in puddling, bubbling, and cracking of the Rhoplex medium and by variations in the actions performed due to the natural imprecision of a slow pour or drip or sometimes due to inattention or impatience. It is important to note that the gestural aspect of this work is a structural feature; it is not related to the abstract expressionist stroke, which was meant as a physical expression of inner life.

In all the other works except Geogroplex, the paint surface is subdued, having been applied to masked areas with a wide, flat brush or, more often, with sponges. This

method grew out of a desire to eliminate attractive flourishes of the brush which might obscure what seemed the more important matters of color and shape relationships. Clear edges and unmodulated colors became a means of reinforcing the flatness of the canvas surface and making color, line, and edge interact more sharply.

## VII. SCULPTURAL TENDENCIES

Along the way, I have made a modest invasion into the territory of sculpture. The corner pieces move into three dimensions, and December 4 has a thick, physically assertive paint layer which is really a low relief. In some cases, repetition has caused the paintings to become more object-like. These sculptural notes were incidental to my exploration of surface and illusion. They have been simply a means of heightening the physical reality of the canvases so that there can be greater tension in the works between tactile and optical reality.



## PART II

### RATIONALE

#### INTRODUCTION

These abstract paintings were developed after several years of "representational" painting, first figure compositions, then surreal landscapes with architectural and humanoid forms. I was motivated to turn to abstraction by a logical search for new formal problems. At the same time, I was looking for a purer expression of the philosophical problems which are discussed in this section of the thesis. Since abstraction has become the language of the modern academy, I felt it important not to make abstract paintings automatically, but rather with caution, asking myself whether or not my own use of abstract form was personal, necessary, and fruitful. In seeking justification for adding to the existing body of abstract painting, I have tried to ignore the conclusion of modernist critics that abstraction is the only proper mode for the late twentieth century. Such historical determinism inhibits artistic self-examination, and I feel that self-doubt and detached reflection must be present in the studio if a painter is to avoid both academic mannerism and that



mindless spontaneity once held up by romantic critics as the true artistic method.

In the following discussion, writers and artists who have either influenced my development or made retrospective sense of my intuitive choices are cited. This section of the thesis does not represent an a priori position from which the paintings followed. It is as much a justification as a starting point; these ideas and the paintings were developed simultaneously. Neither the work nor these thoughts would have taken their present form had the process been otherwise. Although what I write is what my reading, thinking, and painting lead me to believe is true about non-objective painting, it goes without saying that this is a personal statement; no attempt is being made here to cook up a universally applicable theory of abstract painting.

## I. WHAT IS ABSTRACT PAINTING?

There is some depth in the apparently naive question of a peasant to the painter Theodore Rousseau: "Why are you painting that oak tree, since it is already there?" To duplicate real objects by a series of images without substance of their own is, to say the least, a pastime more suitable to youth than to persons who have reached intellectual maturity. The only explanation for this phenomenon is that paintings serve some purpose of their own that is not served, or that is less well served, by the things and beings constituting the world of nature. In other words, it is to be supposed that paintings constitute a universe of their own whose purposiveness, although different from that of nature, can

probably be discovered.

Etienne Gilson<sup>2</sup>

Marino ["whom the unanimous mouths of fame . . . proclaimed the new Homer and the new Dante"] saw the rose as Adam might have seen it in Paradise. And he sensed that it existed in its eternity and not in his words, that we may make mention or allusion of a thing but never express it at all; and the tall proud tomes that cast a golden penumbra in an angle of the drawing room were not--as he had dreamed in his vanity--a mirror of the world, but simply one more thing added to the universe.

Jorge Luis Borges<sup>3</sup>

What I consider fine, what I should like to do, is a book about nothing, a book without external attachments of any sort, which would hold of itself, through the inner strength of its style, as the earth sustains itself with no support in air, a book with almost no subject, or at least an almost invisible subject if possible.

Gustave Flaubert<sup>4</sup>

Even when painting is pure mimesis, it always has its own purpose, apart from that which it imitates. It tries, at the very least, to select and focus a bit of reality, giving the viewer a clearer experience of that reality than he had before. Beyond that, mimetic painting can attempt to record events, to moralize, and to make metaphors, allegories, analogies, and anagogical inter-

<sup>2</sup>Etienne Gilson, Painting and Reality (New York, 1957), p. 176.

<sup>3</sup>Jorge Luis Borges, "A Yellow Rose," A Personal Anthology (New York, 1967), p. 83.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Annette Michelson, "Art and the Structuralist Perspective," On the Future of Art, comp. Museum of Modern Art (New York, 1971), p. 52.

pretations of nature. It can try to universalize the particular, in order to nurture a sense of community based on common human experience or to hint at a transcendental reality. However, Borges' didactic vignette teaches a lesson known to many modern painters, namely that however much a work may strive to express a thing, an experience, or an idea, it can never achieve more than "mention or allusion" of or to it. A work is itself; it is always "one more thing added to the universe." The development of abstract painting, from Cubism to the present, has been largely a gradual, but total, surrender to this aspect of the art work. Every painting, representational or otherwise, is characterized most precisely as an invention and described most precisely according to its abstract values. Therefore it has been easy to embrace pure abstraction, because it also is a complete form of painting, not an art of reduction and renunciation, as is sometimes said.

The movement toward abstraction . . . rejects the notion of idea or object preexistent to its aesthetic form, turning from that illusionism through which such objects could be rendered, tending toward the constitution of a more purely pictorial, sculptural, or literary fact.<sup>5</sup>

The "purely pictorial fact" is Flaubert's "book about nothing."

With his book Art and Culture, Clement Greenberg inspired a whole generation of abstract painters. Some

<sup>5</sup>Michelson, p. 51.



of his criticism has been degraded into academic cant by now, but his original insights opened up understanding of an art work as a real thing possessed of all the weight and mysterious opacity of every other thing in the world.

The avant-garde poet or artist tries in effect to imitate God by creating something valid solely on its own terms, in the way nature itself is valid, in the way a landscape--not its picture--is aesthetically valid; something given, increate, independent of meanings, similars or originals. Content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art or literature cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself.<sup>6</sup>

In Painting and Reality, Gilson writes that "art should be conceived . . . as nature enriching herself by all the additions that it receives at the hands of man."<sup>7</sup> In a passage which compliments Greenberg's position, he makes this definition the basis of a defense of modern art.

During the long episode that lasted from the end of the fifteenth century to the beginning of non-representational art, painters, instead of remaining firmly established on the ground of nature, progressively or regressively shifted over to the ground of imitation, representation, and, in short, exchanged making for knowing. Imitation--that is representation of reality as it appears to be--stands on the side of science, or to use a more modest word, knowledge. Reduced to its simplest expression, the function of modern art has been to restore painting to its primitive and true function which is to continue through man the creative activity of nature. In so doing, modern painting has destroyed nothing and condemned nothing that belongs in any one of the legitimate activities of man; it has simply

<sup>6</sup>Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Gilson, p. 117.

regained the clear awareness of its own nature and recovered its own place among the creative activities of man.<sup>8</sup>

Of The Composer, Auden wrote, "Only your notes are pure contraption/ Only your song is an absolute gift."<sup>9</sup> As we have seen, an abstract painting, devoid of allusions to nature, is also "pure contraption."

## II. PROBLEMS OF ABSTRACT PAINTING

The potential weaknesses of art without any overt subject matter are two: (1) obscurity and (2) empty aestheticism or decorativeness. The obscure or esoteric aspect of abstract art can be mitigated only by the good faith and clear thinking of the painter, but it will never go away completely. The problem of aestheticism, of art-merely-for-the-sake-of-art, can be handled better than that of obscurity. One might try to emphasize the symbolic values of forms like triangles or qualities like balance. There are other local solutions; a painting might be made non-decorative with tough color, large scale, eccentric or banal shapes, and so forth. These solutions are just clues to the fact that an abstract painting is not merely a sensuous object. Art-making and art-viewing can be exercises in moral awareness even

<sup>8</sup>Gilson, p. 285.

<sup>9</sup>W. H. Auden, "The Composer," The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden (New York, 1945), p. 5.

when the art work is abstract. When a painting does not imitate another thing or space or time or mode of existence, then it can carry overtones of truthfulness, austerity, philosophical strictness, and detachment. Such a painting might be obscure, but it will not be merely decorative. A painting that is about the definition of painting, that "cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself," makes possible a clear judgment about the true function and the true nature of a thing, in this case the art of painting.

Kandinsky expressed the feeling that art resembling music, i.e. abstract art, expressed the artist's inner life because of its immaterial quality.<sup>10</sup> For Mondrian, the flatness of a pure abstract picture expressed the incorporeal, hence the spiritual.<sup>11</sup> I am not interested in these possibilities of expressing something outside the work. I am interested in the expression embodied in the nature of the work itself when the work is irreducible, carrying no reference to anything outside itself and having an undeniable presence in the viewer's own space. These concerns represent a dedication to knowing about conventions and means of illusion and a determination not to be

<sup>10</sup>Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, trans. Francis Golffing et al. (New York, 1947), p. 40.

<sup>11</sup>Piet Mondrian, "Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: an Essay in Dialogue Form," trans. Michel Seuphor, in Michel Seuphor, Piet Mondrian: Life and Work (New York, 1957), p. 309.



innocent about the means of painting. Anti-illusionism represents a commitment to the liberal values of detachment and self-knowledge. The "falseness" of the perspective and color-created space in Two-Fold, contrasted with the "truth" of the right-angle bend of the plane, is a mundane exercise in distinguishing between two levels of truth.

### III. THE EXPERIENCE OF VIEWING

#### ABSTRACT PAINTING

Gilson sees painting as an analogue of absolute Being because it serves no purpose except to exist as an object of cognition: "the radiance of painting is that of matter in a sort of state of glory, elevated by the art of man to the condition of a pure object of cognition. There are no such objects in the world of nature."<sup>12</sup> Those contemporary abstract painters who have not been distracted by the chimera of "bridging the gap between art and life" do grant art such a special status, but the meaning is different. Robert Morris, Jules Olitski, and Kenneth Noland, for example, are involved in different ways with the experience of art which refers to nothing outside itself and which has an unyielding physical presence. The literal, physical presence of a work "about nothing" is naturally stronger than that of a work which is about something other than itself. This

<sup>12</sup>Gilson, p. 194.

physical presence can give the viewer an intense experience of his own perception and understanding of things in the world and of his existential relation to them.

The work of art . . . is that sort of object which is never simply understandable as object . . . . It poses for us after all, the conditions of experience, of perception and apperception, eliciting, within our culture, a response to those perceptions which is cognitive. Our perception of the work of art informs us of the nature of consciousness itself. This is what we mean when we say--as I do say--that, although art no longer means or refers, it does have a deeply cognitive function.<sup>13</sup>

It is not only the pure non-objectivity of abstract pictures which gives us insight into "the conditions of experience," but also the specific character of abstract shapes themselves. If Rudolf Arnheim is correct, perception is accomplished with the aid of abstract categories which classify sensory data, making it intelligible. Without concentration over time, we do not see unique details of line, texture, shape and form. Instead, the accidental splendor of the world is simplified by general perceptual concepts like "straight," "round," "triangular," "narrow."

The elementary processes of perception, far from being mere passive registration, are creative acts of grasping structure, even beyond the mere grouping and selecting of parts. What happens in perception is similar to what at a higher psychological level is described as understanding or insight. Perceiving is abstracting in that it represents individual cases through configurations of general categories. Abstraction, then, starts at the most elementary level of cognition, namely with the acquisition of

<sup>13</sup>Michelson, p. 57.



sensory data.<sup>14</sup>

By itself this theory can account for the sense that a serious abstraction, made of simple forms, contains a kind of primary, ineffable truth and, correspondingly, why a masterfully naturalistic rendering of all the accidents and particularities of nature, however marvelous, moves us less. That the abstraction reveals no meaning is of no importance. Why should art be less mysterious than reality? From a slightly different standpoint, Borges held up the very impenetrability of forms as their principal aesthetic attribute.

We might infer that all forms possess their virtue in themselves and not in any conjectural "content." This would accord with Benedetto Croce's thesis, and Pater had already, in 1877, asserted that all the arts aspire to the condition of music, which is pure form. Music, states of happiness, mythology, faces scored by time, certain twilights, certain places, all want to tell us something. This immanence of a revelation that does not take place is, perhaps, the aesthetic fact.<sup>15</sup>

In yet another way, abstract paintings heighten our sense of the very nature of perception and consciousness. The usual ordering concepts which fit experience into intelligible patterns work less well in the disorienting world of the abstract painting. What do we overlook? How do we organize our seeing? Each part of the surface insists on its own fullness and presence. I have chosen shallow,

<sup>14</sup>Rudolf Arnheim, Toward a Psychology of Art (Berkeley, 1966), p. 33.

<sup>15</sup>Borges, "The Wall and the Books," op. cit., p. 92.

nearly flat, pictorial space with this in mind. I have tried to make all shapes positive so that the "realities" of solid bodies and airy spaces, with their different meanings, will not appear in these paintings. (Of course, in terms of two-dimensional design, the same condition of positivity exists in representational paintings. However, the sense of positivity in these abstractions is more immediate than it might be in an illusionistic landscape. Some sophistication and time are required before the viewer can suspend spatial illusion and perceive the shape of negative space between two tree forms as being positive in the two-dimensional design.) When the abstract picture succeeds in enlivening the entire flat canvas surface, then every part of it simultaneously invites wakeful attention. One cannot discriminate between body and space, description and dialogue, nature and artifice, actor and backdrop. Ideally, a kind of transcendental equilibrium can be suggested.

"Equilibrium," as it applies to painting, is a quality which resists close analysis. It is a quality which I attribute to every work I value, but I can define it only with words as vague as "weight," "fullness," "stability," and "presence." It is not simply a matter of balanced compositional elements. Kandinsky must have thought of it as tranquility. He wrote, "Every serious work is tranquil . . . . Every serious work resembles in poise the quiet

phrase: 'I am here.' Like or dislike for the work evaporates; but the sound of that phrase is eternal."<sup>16</sup> I am reminded that an Indian student of John Cage once told him that her teacher at home had said that the purpose of music was "to sober and quiet the mind, thus rendering it susceptible to divine influences."<sup>17</sup> If a work of art can do this, it is surely because in its own poise or fullness it represents timeless, absolute quietude.

<sup>16</sup>Kandinsky, p. 77, n. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Calvin Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors: Five Members of the Avant-Garde (New York, 1968), p. 99.

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